

## ***Acts of Devotion that Glorify God***

In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus warned about the threat of hypocrisy that often accompanies acts of piety, but He also assumes that His disciples will practice certain spiritual disciplines – namely, giving, fasting, and prayer. Last week we briefly looked at why we should give. This week we will look at prayer.

### ***-Prayer-***

Matthew 6:9 – 15 is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer. It's ironic that in a context that forbids meaningless repetition we find this prayer, for no prayer has been repeated without understanding more often than this one.

There is nothing wrong with praying the Lord’s Prayer as it is; in fact, in Luke it is presented as a prayer to use (“when you pray, *say*. . .”). However, here it is presented as a model for prayer; He didn’t say “This is *what* you should pray;” He said “This is *how* you should pray.” What is essential to remember is that this prayer is contrasted to the hypocritical prayers of the pagans in the verses above. Their prayers were thoughtless and repetitive; true prayer is far from mechanical, but is a heart-felt response to God.

In reading this prayer it becomes immediately apparent that Jesus places God at the center of life.

It moves from:

God's glory: “hallowed be Your name”	
God's purposes: "Your kingdom come"	
God's will: "Your will be done"	
To:	God's provision: "Give us this day our daily bread”
	God's pardon: "Forgive us our debts"
	God's protection: "Lead us not into temptation"

The first three sections call our attention to God’s greatness; the last three call attention to our needs. The two halves have a very different feel. The first half feels majestic and lofty. The last half feels mundane and lowly. But this corresponds to real life which is a combination of that which is eternally glorious and that which is commonplace.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “God has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” In other words, there is something in our nature that causes us to want more than we have in the temporal world. We have a desire to know the meaning of life and discern our destiny. We want to know how the earthly relates to the spiritual realm. We want to know how working, eating and enjoying life can relate to our desire to serve, worship and love the living God. This desire has been placed within us by God. God has put a longing for eternity in man’s heart. Unfortunately, God’s plan is too vast for us to know, so understanding the whole will remain an enigma and frustration. We will remain restrained by time and never have the ability to fully grasp what is in the mind of God.

To state it differently, the eternal plan of God is being accomplished in the time frame of history, so we can see the eternal plan of God and temporal world we live in crossing paths. However, we are not able to see it perfectly, nor are we able to enjoy it completely. Laying hold of eternity is impossible for us because of our finitude. Therefore, we must live in tension and limit our focus to the isolated matters in the time we live upon the earth.

This mixed perspective of the world is also spoken of by Paul. He tells us that we have “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” and yet, “we have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Co. 4:7). He says that we have been raised with Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6), yet he cries “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Ro. 7:24). Everywhere in Scripture we find the glories of God overlapping the ordinary affairs of men.

So Jesus is mindful that the iridescence of eternity is woven into nitty-gritty struggle of ordinary life; we pray to our heavenly Father about His eternal purposes, but we still need food and forgiveness and protection from evil. But the main purpose of the opening words of this prayer is to establish the right frame of mind when approaching God; Jesus wants us to consider who we are talking to.

### ***1) Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name***

The opening sentence is not as concerned with the proper protocol (that is, the proper etiquette in approaching deity) as it is with truth (that we come to Him with the right frame of mind) (Stott, 146).

**Our** Father (not **my** Father) includes a broader prayer than just for my own needs; it includes the needs of others as well. In other words, the Lord's Prayer is an invitation to corporate prayer. Of course, you can say, "Our Father . . . Give us our daily bread, forgive our debts, and lead us not into temptation," when you are praying alone. But if you do, you have to at least bring to your mind the truth that you are praying as part of a family of other believers.

Jesus also addresses God as “**Father.**” This implies that God is personal.

In a sense all men are God's children since God made and sustains them all (Acts 17:28, 29). But God is Father to Christians in a special way (Jn.1:12; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 2:11-15). We are sons by adoption into God's family and by birth (Jn. 3:5). This is the way “father” is most commonly used in Scripture when referring to God.

The thought of sonship is basic to the obedience detailed in the Sermon on the Mount (see notes on Matt. 5:44-48), but it is also the source of joy and peace we have as believers. In Matthew 6:31–32 Jesus said “Do not be anxious, saying “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” Because our Father knows our needs, we don't have to be anxious about them. Pagan deities were believed to be indifferent, capricious, unrighteous, and unloving; in contrast, our sonship includes forgiveness, acceptance, inheritance, family, discipline, and relationship. We have a Father who loves to be with his children and meet our needs.

So when Jesus teaches us to begin our prayers with "Our Father," He is teaching us to remember that we have a Father and we belong to a family.

The Jews viewed God as utterly transcendent, but in doing so his personality was often lost. They preferred more exalted titles such as "Sovereign Lord," "King of the universe", etc. One can hardly imagine what went through their minds as they heard Jesus call God "Father" and tell them to do the same; it was no doubt with great timidity that they first uttered these words. John says, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (I Jn. 3:1).

Modern Christians tend to stray in the opposite direction – we view God as personal but at times His transcendence is lost; as a result we cannot sense the sheer privilege of addressing Him as Father. Jesus finds the perfect balance between the transcendence and imminence of God. God is not just our Father – He is our Father who is IN HEAVEN whose name is hallowed.

In Scripture, a "name" is much more than a tag that identifies someone and distinguishes him or her from other people. Rather, "names were generally descriptive of the person, of his position, of some circumstance affecting him, hope entertained concerning him, etc., so that "the name" often came to stand for the person" (ISBE under "name"). An example that is easy to understand is in Matthew 1:21: "you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins. "Jesus" was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua." In its long form, Joshua (Exo. 24:13 – יהושע) means "Yahweh is salvation" and in its short form (Neh. 7:7 - יֵשׁוּעַ) it means "Yahweh saves." "For" in Matthew 1:21 tells us WHY He is to be called "Jesus" – for He IS God who saves us. "Jesus" was therefore descriptive of the person. His name ("Yahweh saves") described His nature (it is He who will save His people from their sins).

The "names" of God are also used in this way to describe Him. When God uses a particular name in the Bible He is revealing something about Himself. The "name of God was therefore not a mere word, but the whole of the Divine manifestation, the character of God as revealed in His relations to His people and in His dealings with them (Ex 9:16; Josh 7:9; 9:9, etc.)" (ISBE under "the name of God").

To "hallow" means to sanctify, to make holy, or to consider holy. When Jesus prays that God's name be hallowed He is telling us to pray that God's name be set apart in people's hearts, minds, and lives as the infinitely great and beautiful reality that it is.

Before we pray, it is always wise to remember who God is. Only then can we come to Him with the proper humility, confidence, and devotion.

## **2) Your kingdom come**

The OT is full of promises about the coming kingdom of God when Messiah would rule as king. All devout Jews looked forward to it and prayed for its coming (Mk. 15:43). Jesus and John had preached

about it. This kingdom will begin when Christ comes again, and with it the world will experience blessings it has never known before. Men will be saved by the multitudes (Isa. 12). The world will be full of joy (Isa. 61:1-3; 51:11; Jer.31:12-14). Evil will be punished and righteousness abound (Isa.2:11; Ps.72:4, 7). Military warfare will be abolished (Ps.46:9; Hos. 2:18; Mic. 4:3, 4). There will be beneficial climatic changes (Isa. 30:23-26; 35:6, 7). There will be peace within nature (Hos. 2:18; Isa. 11:6-9). Disease and deformity will disappear (Isa. 35:5, 6; 33:24). But the greatest blessing of all is that Christ will rule as King of kings. Surely God's glorious plans should move our hearts to pray.

### ***3) Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven***

In heaven everything takes place as God desires. Everything is pleasing to Him. When God's will is fully realized, all evil, rebellion, and lawlessness will end. Our prayer should be that the day will hasten. In essence, Jesus wants our prayers to focus on more than ourselves. He wants our desires to be the same as God's desires. He wants us to pray for God's glory, His reign, and His will.



for a more complete discussion about the name of "God" see [gracefellowshiphawaii.org](http://gracefellowshiphawaii.org) (home page); then go to the tab "study resources" > "Theological Studies" > scroll to "God" - "The Trinity (I)" pages 7-9 & "The Fatherhood of God"

Because we are constantly under the influence of society, many of us are more concerned with our "glory", our will, and our own empire than God's. But the greatest desire of anyone who is born again is not to live for our name but for His. Whether we can pray these petitions from our hearts or not, is a searching test of the reality and depth of our faith.

If we pray that God's will be done on earth, we are committing ourselves to learning as much about God's will as possible. This means studying the scriptures. If my heart's desire is that God's will be done, then I am also praying that by the grace of God I will do it.

Do we really hunger for the kingdom of God to come in all its surpassing righteousness? Do we desire His name to be glorified among all the inhabitants of the earth? Do we desire that His will be done, or do we spend most of our time praying by seeking our will?